

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Extension Service
Washington 25, D. C.

HOME DEMONSTRATION WORK

Education for Living^{1/}

By Madge J. Reese
Field Agent, Division of Field Coordination



Well known to county officials in all the States and Territories is one of your fellow county officials, or shall we say, one of your county women officials, the home demonstration agent. In a year's time she has many callers at her office, gives information to hundreds over the telephone, answers innumerable inquiries by mail, and sends out thousands of bulletins and circulars. When you call at the home demonstration agent's office you often find that she is out in the county, because she is a teacher whose classroom is not in the county courthouse but in the rural homes or at some community center. Though the responsibilities of her job claim most of her time, she is often requested to give counsel in the planning of educational and civic undertakings because of her first-hand knowledge of home and community conditions throughout the county. Her record of service in emergency programs has always merited the highest praise, and she was a true soldier on the home front during the war.

A Heavy Work Load

The question is sometimes asked: What is the work load of a county home demonstration agent? She is ever on the alert to be of service by furnishing information to rural families, and urban families as well, demonstrating improved methods in housekeeping and homemaking, guiding groups of women and girls in carrying out programs that focus directly into the home or are of worth-while benefit to the community. We can cite you the averages for the whole country that made up some of the work load. In 1949 the average county home demonstration agent—

- Worked with 17 adult home demonstration groups with 406 members
- Worked with 312 girls in 4-H Club work
- Made 267 farm or home visits, to 158 different farms or homes
- Conferred with 521 office visitors, and answered 641 telephone calls
- Prepared 95 news articles and stories for press
- Broadcast or prepared for broadcasting 12 radio programs
- Distributed 2,876 bulletins

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Conducted 21 volunteer leader-training meetings attended by 258 leaders for adult programs and 146 4-H Club leaders . . .
Conducted 147 method-demonstration meetings with a total attendance of 2,732 adults, older youth, and 4-H Club members . . .
Participated in 67 other extension meetings, with a total attendance of 3,961 adults, older youth, and 4-H Club members . . .

Other activities cannot easily be measured numerically.

The home demonstration agent is a professionally trained home economist, a graduate of a college or university. She often has had previous experience in teaching, homemaking, or in business, and usually has a rural or farm background. She believes in farm living as a good way of life and finds satisfaction in assisting rural families in recognizing and solving their own problems.

She is a joint employee of the State agricultural college, the United States Department of Agriculture, and the county in which she works. Today at the county seats in the county extension offices 2,800 county home demonstration agents, and 680 assistants in the more populated counties, are serving rural America with noteworthy results. In the Southern States the 400 Negro home demonstration agents, included in the total above, are working effectively with Negro families.

Education in the Home

In this modern, busy time you will agree with me that homemaking with its many demands and interests is a real business in itself. The farm home is an important factor in the farm business, and the farm woman is the farmer's business partner. Certainly the woman in the home needs information, training, and encouragement in making the dollars go a long way by wise buying and thrift in the home, in keeping her family well through proper nutrition and health habits, in saving her own time and energy by management and efficient work methods, in making the home comfortable and attractive with the least expenditure of money, and, most important, in caring for the children intelligently and raising them to become honorable and useful citizens. Home is where the whole family assembles at nightfall, and it remains largely the responsibility of the mother to keep the home a happy place where children like to be and where young people are proud to bring their friends. All this takes knowledge, and constant thought and work on the part of the whole family, but especially on the part of the mother. The farm and ranch women in your county, and the urban homemakers too, have always welcomed the practical kind of education for living that home demonstration work offers.

Home demonstration work is an important part of the national system of co-operative extension work in agriculture and home economics, financed cooperatively by the United States Department of Agriculture, States, and counties. In each State it is under the administration of the State director of extension work located at your State agricultural college. The State extension supervisors and State extension specialists in agriculture and home economics have headquarters also at the State agricultural college.

Every phase of family living concerns the home demonstration agent, since the program is planned with the homemakers to meet their many needs and interests. The State supervisor and the State home economics specialists keep her up to date in subject matter and in methods of working with people. The home demonstration agent serves as a connecting link between the research laboratory and the homemaker. She is called to the agricultural college at least once each year for in-service training. She and the county agricultural agent work together on programs of interest to the whole family, such as gardening, farmstead improvement, and community programs in relation to health and recreation, and with special interest groups for young men and women. In most counties the home demonstration agent gives one-third to one-half of her time to conducting 4-H Club work with girls as well as to working with adult homemakers.

Something for Every Age

We have rightly quit saying, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks," but would rather give the answer given by one of the pioneers in extension work, "You can, if you know the tricks." Age counts very little in determining whether a person will learn or fail to learn something he really wants to learn. The psychologist and the educator tell us that the curve of learning after 45 slows, that powers fail a little more rapidly after that age, but that it is foolish to think we cannot learn because of the years themselves. Cato, the great Roman philosopher, started to learn Greek when he was past 80, and when asked why he chose to learn Greek at that age, he replied, "What other age have I?" Many homes and families are more successful today because the grand total of 25 million or more homemakers asked themselves that question during the past 35 years and joined home demonstration groups improving their homemaking skills and broadening their outlook on life.

One Western ranchwoman has well said, "Families cannot live as isolationists any more than nations can. What my neighbor's home is will have an influence on my own home One of the things I like so much about the home demonstration club is that it knows no age limit. There is something in it for every age, whether it be a young matron or the older woman who has finished the task of raising a family and has time to do some of the things she has always wanted to try."

The State agricultural college and the United States Department of Agriculture were the first agencies to go into the business of adult education, of the kind that teaches agriculture and home economics by extending the college beyond the campus, out to the farms and into the homes of the Nation. This educational undertaking has made noteworthy progress in the past half century. Beginning in 1904 with a few farm demonstrations in three or four States, it expanded by 1949 to assisting directly or influencing 6,808,612 families in the 48 States, the Territories of Alaska and Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. Both the adult and youth phases in this unique system of education known as extension work have attracted attention throughout the world. From 63 countries in 7 years, 743 educators have come to the United States to study educational methods used by extension workers, and 364 young people have come to work and live on our farms and ranches for a time and learn especially about 4-H Club work.

We are sure that you recognize that the philosophy which determines the work of any extension agent is getting people to want to learn and to understand, and that the approach is on the basis of offering services. There is no compulsion. The home demonstration agent assembles facts, interprets them, and suggests ways of practical application of information for the improvement of the home and the enjoyment of the family. She organizes committees and groups and trains volunteer leaders to assist in conducting the program. The homemakers themselves make the decision as to what the program shall be. Their needs and wants are many, as all of us know, and vary somewhat in different sections of the country. The program is expanding in scope each year in keeping with the broadened interests of women in this country.

We want you to take a look at a few of the program activities that the rural women of this country think important and some of the accomplishments reported by home demonstration agents.

Improved Diets and Better Nutrition

The average American family eats more wisely and has better food than in times past—more green, leafy, and yellow vegetables; more milk, butter, and eggs; more fresh, canned, and frozen fruits and vegetables; and usually a sufficient amount of meat. The relation of food to health and the "basic seven" foods for good nutrition are fundamentals that homemakers are learning through home demonstration clubs, in the press, and over the radio. The mother with a problem child in eating habits is being helped. Do we stop to think about this fact, that nowhere else on earth have there been made available as many helpful publications on food production, food selection, preparation, and preservation as have been made available by our agricultural colleges and the United States Department of Agriculture? The home demonstration agent can be credited with a wide distribution of information on food and nutrition.

As a nutritional project extension information has encouraged the enrichment of flour and corn meal. Organized home demonstration groups of homemakers take considerable initiative in spreading information of the nutritional value of such enrichment. Legislation has been passed in 26 States in different sections of the country, and in Hawaii and Puerto Rico, requiring the enrichment of flour and bread. Corn meal enrichment is practiced in five Southern States.

In 1941, home demonstration agents assisted 1,458,082 families in improving diets, 1,493,590 families in food preparation, 1,051,697 families in canning, and 755,970 families in freezing foods. They also assisted 224,307 mothers with child-feeding problems, and gave some help to 10,349 schools in establishing or maintaining hot school lunches.

Clothing the Family

Ask any homemaker and she will tell you that it is no little task to keep her family clothed these days. Home sewing has reached a new peak because of high prices of ready-mades and because a variety of attractive new materials in yardage is available. Even though there is a slight downward trend in prices of ready-made clothing, the average-income family finds it

a saving to do some home sewing. Approximately 1,678,410 families in 1949 received instructions in clothing construction and remodeling. Sewing was popular with 603,213 4-H Club girls. Instruction in remodeling, renovation, and care of clothing makes for thrift and aids the homemaker in keeping her family well dressed. When she becomes familiar with quality in household textiles she makes a wiser purchaser. Sewing-machine clinics keep the much-used and the old-time machines in working condition.

Saving Woman-Hours

Good home management takes on special significance in farm homes where the women and girls give some of their time and energy to gardening, the care of poultry, and other outdoor work. The circulars on time and energy saving in housekeeping prepared by home-management specialists are much in demand. Some of the practices and adjustments suggested seem simple in themselves, but in the aggregate, for the day or week, may mean many woman-hours saved. Fatigue, its causes and how to avoid it, has been the subject of discussion at meetings. Division of labor in the home, rearrangement of kitchen equipment, comfortable working heights, better lighting at work centers, easier laundering methods, efficient cleaning methods, sufficient storage space, selection and care of electrical equipment, and home water systems, are carefully studied by homemakers and often become realities in their homes to save time and energy. This means more family recreation and community activities. Seventy-eight per cent of all farms now have electricity, but two-thirds still have no running water and more than half do not have a kitchen sink. Family financial planning or money management comes in for important attention, and women learn to keep not only home accounts but sometimes the farm accounts as well.

Attractive, Happy Homes

In these booming days of building new homes and remodeling old ones, extension agents are called upon for their assistance in planning dwellings and also farm buildings. Our information is that in 1949 there were built 1,024,000 new urban homes and that in 1950 a million and a half would be built. No reliable figures are available for new rural homes, but it is evident that much building in rural areas is under way. Extension agents are informing themselves of plans for homes suitable to the particular area and climate. Home demonstration agents are especially interested in functional housing, planning the home for convenience, for comfortable living, and for the activities of all members of the family. In 1949 extension agents assisted 51,238 families in plans for new homes and 116,615 families in plans for remodeling.

Wise homemakers know that the comfortable and attractive home helps to uphold family morale and that the memory of a well-kept and happy home is the richest heritage that can be left to any child. With the assistance of home demonstration agents 409,880 families learned to do over and re-upholster old furniture and how to use color attractively in house furnishings in 1949. Improving the farmstead, and beautifying the home grounds according to good landscaping plans as well brought great satisfaction to 412,980 families.

Children and Good Home Influence

Child development and family relations make up a newer educational field known as family-life education. The purpose of this program in family life is to make available the results of research and study in the field of human development and relations, with interpretations that will permit the use of such knowledge in the daily lives of families. There are 21 State specialists and 8 part-time specialists guiding the program in child development and family-life education. As far back in the history of mankind as we know, the family has been the unit of society. Studies show that homes and families exert more influence on children than do any other institutions. Many social problems of today, all of us know, in many instances grow out of unstable, inadequate family relationships. There is no substitute for the home as the most effective place to learn responsibility, integrity, dependability, and respect for others.

At the home demonstration meetings and in the special-interest groups for young mothers and fathers, such topics as these have been discussed and considered: Training children in good habits; teaching them the use of money; responsibility in the sharing of homework by all members of the family; cooperation of the family in all family activities and in recreation; courtesy and good manners within the home; and special adolescent problems.

There is a growing demand for information and counsel on family-life problems, as most parents want their children trained in the manner that will produce personalities that can cope with the challenges, the stresses, and the strains of life in this modern world. Approximately 321,167 families were assisted in child-development and 380,955 families in family-relations problems in 1949.

Guarding Family Health

Rural health programs deal with the mental and physical well-being of people as influenced by nutrition; adequate hospital, medical, and nursing services; sanitation; safety on the farm and in the home; adequate housing; and good family living. Educational programs in which extension forces cooperate help to bring about a realization of the seriousness of many problems on the part of rural people and encourage coordination in working out problem solutions.

In addition to helping families obtain a better understanding of the part sound nutrition plays in health, the home demonstration program contributes to better family and community health in various ways. Home demonstration groups have sponsored or cooperated with other agencies in clinics for preschool children and in dental clinics. There is active cooperation in cancer control, tuberculosis and infantile paralysis educational programs, and in various immunization campaigns.

Improvement in sanitation in and about the home can result in better family health, and programs are carried on to emphasize pure water and clean milk supply, screening against flies and mosquitoes, proper sewage disposal, and

clean-up campaigns. Extension agents cooperate with public health services in making wide distribution of information on home nursing, first aid, medicine chests, prevention of common colds, prenatal care, and care of infants.

In some counties local committees have surveyed hospital facilities and medical services. The lack of such facilities is of special concern to the more isolated areas. As the result of a study of the survey in some counties a county health council has been organized and health programs of concern to the whole county have been formulated.

Work in Cities, Too

The number of nonfarm rural homes and urban homes requesting the assistance of the home demonstration agent is increasing each year. War brought the city and country closer together. The emergency extension programs in food production and conservation acquainted the people of larger towns and cities with the services offered by the Extension Service. Radio programs and articles in the press featuring home demonstration activities account for much of the interest and demand. The rapid increase of urban population and of suburban homes, and more part-time farming on small acreages near the larger city centers, make all of us rural-minded folk sit up and take notice. We are aware of the fact that many urban homemakers want the same type of assistance that home demonstration work affords. In some ten States, mostly Eastern, urban home demonstration agents are employed in a few cities. New York passed a law in 1945 which makes it possible for an additional State appropriation being made to counties having one or more cities each with 25,000 urban population or more for urban home demonstration work. In 1947 the Oregon State Legislature passed an act permitting city councils to appropriate for extension work in cities over 10,000. In 1949 reports from 2,105 counties indicated that 2,138,201 homes other than farm homes changed practices as a definite result of the home demonstration program.

A new service in consumer education in marketing under the Research and Marketing Act of 1946 is proving especially helpful to city and urban homemakers. This program gets day-by-day market information into the homes through the press, radio, television, and retail stores and through organized groups of urban women. Alerting homemakers about commodities in abundant supply helps them to make better use of the food dollar by intelligent selection and buying of food. They become acquainted with quality, grade, and variety. In 23 States and in Puerto Rico extension specialists in consumer education in marketing are working either as area or State specialists or as city agents.

Better Homes Mean Better Communities

The thinking and planning of many home demonstration groups extend to the community as well as to the homes. Recreational activities received increased attention in 29,424 communities and in 605,846 homes in 1949. Planned facilities for book distribution in rural communities where there are no libraries is a popular project. In 1949, 892 county extension agents throughout the country reported that 7,120 communities were assisted in providing library facilities.

Largely through the efforts of home demonstration groups 2,819 club or community houses and rest rooms for rural women at the county seats were established. Also through community effort, 7,153 school or other community grounds were improved or landscaped. Home demonstration work stimulates community pride.

Both urban and rural women get much satisfaction in being better informed about public policies and in being able citizens. Greater interest is being shown in what goes on in local and State government activities and public affairs. A large number of rural women are making an intelligent study of what is going on in the world. The farm women in one Midwestern State have a slogan; "Home is the center of a woman's life, not its circumference." Training schools and institutes on citizenship for rural leaders, and forums and discussions with home demonstration groups, have been conducted in a good number of States. Such interests as the State's educational problems, a community's responsibility to its children, what good citizenship is, and understanding county government have been among discussion group subjects.

World Neighbors

The Second World War made the world seem small. The fact that the interest of some home demonstration groups has gone beyond State lines and the borders of the United States continues to be evident. Hundreds of rural women are corresponding with rural women of other lands—pen-friends as they are called—learning about the problems and life of neighbors across the sea. There have been exchange programs with groups in England, Australia, New Zealand, Scotland, the Netherlands, and other countries. International Day programs have featured the life and culture of people in many countries. The women have been interested in learning more about the work of the United Nations, especially the purposes and possibilities of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization, and the World Health Conference. About 100 rural women from home demonstration clubs attended the Triennial Conference of Associated Country Women of the World in September 1947 at Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and some of them have given 50 talks on conditions they observed in Europe, in the past 3 years. Nearly two hundred women representing home demonstration clubs plan to attend the conference of the Associated Country Women of the World at Copenhagen, Denmark, in September 1950, and they will have interesting reports to give their friends and neighbors in the counties upon their return. All this interest in world affairs on the part of rural women in the United States adds up in no small way to better international understanding, which is an important factor in world peace.

The week of May 1, National Home Demonstration Week, told you in your newspaper and over your radio much about the accomplishments of home demonstration work and expressed the appreciation of the State, county, and national extension workers to the 448,170 local volunteer leaders without whose help we would not be able to reach the goal for larger participation in the home demonstration program each year. All county officials will concur with us that the theme for the week used throughout the whole country—"Today's Home Builds Tomorrow's World"—is a guiding concept to keep before us when both rural and urban families are encouraged to go forward with pride and determination in making their homes still better places to live today and tomorrow. Yes, home demonstration work is an education for living.

HOME DEMONSTRATION WORK

GOES FORWARD

(1949 National Report)

Number of home demonstration clubs -- 57,420.

Number of members enrolled -- 1,341,743.

Number of volunteer local leaders assisting in home demonstration program -- 449,170.

Number of girls enrolled in 4-H Clubs -- 1,032,116.

Number of women volunteer leaders assisting in 4-H Club work -- 118,713.

Number of women members of county agricultural planning committees -- 25,476.

Number of young women in special groups -- 102,987.

Number of homes changing practices as result of home demonstration work -- 3,231,481.

Total attendance of adults at meetings conducted by home demonstration agents -- 12,389,322.

Number of families influenced by some phase of the extension program -- 6,808,612.

MAJOR OBJECTIVES EXTENSION SERVICE PROGRAM

The ultimate aim of all educational effort in our democracy is toward motivating life, giving it significance, and making life worth the living. Home demonstration work contributes its full share to the attainment of the following objectives:

Improvement of the economic, social, and spiritual well-being of the rural family.

Increase in farm income through the application of science and of farm mechanization.

Encouraging people to become wiser consumers.

Improvement of the health of rural people through better nutrition and more adequate health facilities and services.

Improvement of family living through better housing, rural electrification, and more adequate labor-saving equipment.

Improvement of educational and recreational facilities for the home and the community.

Development of a better understanding of community, State, national, and international affairs, and more effective participation in them, to the end that constructive policies may be determined.

Improvement of conservation resources so that future generations also may have good living and the general welfare thereby be safeguarded.